



Bus tour takes a look at historic houses in Camas-Washougal area

By SANDRA WALTERS
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The Heritage Trust of Clark County sponsored a bus tour of the Evergreen Highway and the Camas-Washougal area May 16 as part of its celebration of National Historic Preservation Week.

Tour leaders Jane Morrison, director of the Heritage Trust of Clark County, and Judy Noall, of Clark County Parks and Recreation, offered a bit of history on the area and houses viewed along the way.

"This is the first tour of this kind," Morrison said. "We hope that everyone learns a bit of history about the area."

The four-hour tour featured stops at the fish hatchery on the Evergreen Highway and a short walk on one of the nature paths within Lacamas Lake Park. But the main focus of the tour was on John Roffler and the homes he built in the Camas and Washougal area in the early part of this century.

In a book written by Camas resident Sally Alves, the life of Roffler and his homes are described in great detail and allow the reader to imagine his life and the times of Camas-Washougal in the early 1900s.

In her book, "John Roffler: Camas Craftsman," Alves describes how Roffler first came to Camas with his family in 1889 from Minnesota at the age of 10. At 20, Roffler became interested in building boats and furniture and then he got a chance to help work on the Pittcock-Leadbetter House. The experience propelled the young Roffler into a life of building houses.

Constructed in 1902, on Leadbetter Road over looking Lackamas Lake, the Pittcock-Leadbetter House was de-

signed in the Queen Anne style, with a three-story circular bay capped with a conical roof projecting from the structure. The house was a wedding gift to Henry Pittcock's son Frederick and his new wife, Bertha Leadbetter.

In 1906, Roffler built the John Roffler I House, located at 1437 N.E. Everett St. in Camas, for his wife who was expecting their first child. This home is a scaled down version of the Pittcock-Leadbetter home and includes the same Queen Anne style construction.

The house is currently owned by Alves and her husband, Jerry, who purchased it in 1989. When the couple realized the history their house held they began digging to find out all they could. The result of all the research was Alves' book on Roffler.

"I talked with Roffler's daughter, Irene, and found out all I could about him," Alves said. "I feel that the home belongs to the whole community, not just us."

The Alves' have restored the home to what they believe it would have been like when it was first built.

"A lot of the old photos in the living room are of John Roffler, we had copies made from photos his daughter had," she said. "We've tried to give an authentic look to the home, but one

that we're able to live in."

The Alves' home was placed on the Clark County Heritage Register on Aug. 14, 1990, by the Heritage Trust of Clark County.

Another house viewed during the tour was the Charles E. Farrell House built in 1915 for Roffler's sister Ursula Rose Roffler and her husband, Charles E. Farrell, who worked at the paper mill.

In her book, Alves writes that Roffler designed the home from a picture of a house on a postcard his sister gave him. The home, located at 137 N.E. 14th St. in Camas, is currently being remodeled.

Other Roffler houses include the John Roffler IV built in 1911 in Oak Park, which is similar to the Farrell House; the Anna Roffler Eddy House, built in 1920 at 832 N.E. Fifth St., is done in Prairie Style, which was popular from 1900-1920; and several other houses throughout Camas and Washougal. Currently all of Roffler's houses are privately owned.

"We once believed that Roffler had built about 54 homes in the area," Morrison said. "But, an article in a 1911 Post-Record said he had completed 54 homes in 55 months. We're not sure how many homes he has built, probably around 200 or more."



HERITAGE TRUST of Clark County, along with the Clark County Parks Department, sponsored a bus tour of the old Evergreen Highway and historic houses in the Camas-Washougal area. (Top) This John Roffler home, currently owned by Jerry and Sally Alves, was just one of the historic architect's houses viewed during the tour was the Anna Roffler Eddy home located on N.E. Fifth. (Staff photos by Sandra Walters)